

# MORE PREMIUM CATTLE PASSING THROUGH LOCAL PLANTS

In recent years premiums available at point of slaughter for some native bred cattle such as Aberdeen Angus and Hereford have encouraged an increase these genetics on both the local beef and dairy herds. This trend can also be observed in GB and ROI.

This has increased the number of these native bred cattle on local farms and has subsequently resulted in more of these animals passing through local processing plants. During the first four months of 2020 Aberdeen Angus cattle accounted for 22 per cent of price reported prime cattle in Northern Ireland. This proportion has been steadily increasing in recent years in line with increased calf registrations.

The number of Hereford cattle passing through local processing plants has also been increasing, although not to the same extent as the number of Aberdeen

Angus cattle. During 2020 to date Hereford cattle accounted for seven per cent of prime cattle throughput in local price reporting plants, a proportion that has also been steadily growing.

**Table 1** provides a comparison of price reported Aberdeen Angus and Hereford steers in terms of age at slaughter and average carcase weight compared to all other beef sired cattle during the first four months of 2020 and the corresponding period during the previous two years. **Table 2** provides the same information for price reported heifers.

Many of the major processing plants have schemes and bonuses in place for Aberdeen Angus cattle while a few also have schemes in place for Hereford cattle. There is some variability in the bonuses available for these native bred cattle across the plants while there are

**Table 1: Average carcase weight and age at slaughter of Aberdeen Angus, Hereford and all other beef sired steers from January to April 2018-2020** Source: LMC Price Reporting

	Aberdeen Angus		Hereford		Other beef	
	Weight (kg)	Age (months)	Weight (kg)	Age (months)	Weight (kg)	Age (months)
2018	332	23.8	342	25.0	371	24.9
2019	341	24.4	346	25.3	377	25.7
2020	348	24.2	351	25.1	377	25.3

**Table 2: Average carcase weight and age at slaughter of Aberdeen Angus, Hereford and all other beef sired heifers from January to April 2018-2020** Source: LMC Price Reporting

	Aberdeen Angus		Hereford		Other beef	
	Weight (kg)	Age (months)	Weight (kg)	Age (months)	Weight (kg)	Age (months)
2018	296	24.0	299	24.9	329	25.0
2019	304	24.5	302	25.2	334	25.5
2020	309	24.3	308	25.1	339	25.5

also some key differences in the specifications cattle are required to meet, particularly in terms of weight and age which may require producers

to make changes to current farming systems.

Producers considering going down the

route of finishing Aberdeen Angus or Hereford cattle should consult with the procurement staff of the individual plants for further information.

# TIGHTENING CATTLE AVAILABILITY IMPACTING BASE QUOTES

Base quotes for prime cattle improved this week in response to tighter cattle availability for slaughter. Quotes towards the end of this week ranged from 318-322p/kg with most plants indicating similar quotes for early next week.

The tighter availability of cattle for slaughter has been reflected in the number of animals passing through local processing plants. Last week 5,815 prime cattle and 1,281 cows were processed locally, back from 6,697 prime cattle and 1,506 cows in the corresponding week last year.

**Table 3** below shows the number of cattle for beef production on local farms at the end of April 2020 compared to the same period in 2018 and 2019. This includes all cattle with a beef sire and all dairy sired male cattle.

Cattle for beef production aged between 18-30 months will provide the bulk of prime cattle throughput over the next six months. At the end of April 2020 there were 114,541 cattle for beef production on Northern Ireland farms, back 4.6 per cent from April 2019 levels.

There were a further 117,493 cattle for beef production on Northern Ireland farms at the end of April 2020 aged between 24-30 months. This was back nine per cent from year earlier levels and was six per cent behind April 2018 levels.

Overall there were 232,034 cattle for beef production aged between 18-30 months on Northern Ireland farms at the end of April 2020. This was back from 249,138 head at the end of April 2019. Overall this decline by 17,104 head accounts for a 6.9 per cent in

cattle availability for slaughter.

While cattle availability for slaughter is expected to remain tight in the shorter term they are expected to record a recovery towards the end of the year. The number of cattle aged 12-18 months at the end of April 2020 was similar to April 2019 levels while the number of cattle in the younger age groups has increased.

Cattle for beef production aged under 12 months totalled 325,646 head at the end of April 2020, up from 308,693 head in April 2019. This increase has been driven by an increase in beef sired calf registrations to both suckler and dairy cows. There has also been a slight increase in the number of dairy sired male cattle on local farms aged less than 12 months.

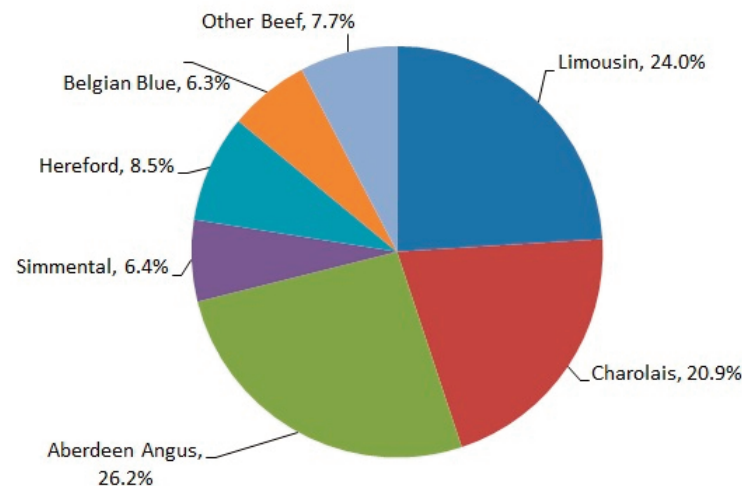
# CALF REGISTRATIONS INCREASE IN 2020

During the first four months of 2020 there were 134,098 beef sired calves registered in Northern Ireland, an increase of 8,100 head or 6.4 per cent from the 125,998 beef sired calves registered in the same period in 2019.

This increase in beef calf registrations was driven primarily by an increase in the number of calf registrations to suckler cows although there has also been a slight increase in the number of beef calves registered to dairy cows during 2020 to date.

Aberdeen Angus was the most popular breed and accounted for 26.2 per cent of all beef sired calf registrations during

**Figure 1: Beef sired calf registrations in Northern Ireland by breed January-April 2020 Source: DAERA**



2020 to date. In the same period in 2019 Aberdeen Angus calves accounted for 25.7 per cent of beef sired calf registrations in the region.

Charolais calves accounted for 21 per cent of total beef calf registrations while a further 24 per of beef calves were Limousin. These proportions were similar to year earlier levels.

Hereford and Simmental calves made up a further 8.5 per cent and 6.4 per cent of beef calf registrations during 2020 to date, both back by half a percentage point from year earlier levels.

**Table 3: Cattle on Northern Ireland farms for beef production by age category at the end of April 2020. Source: DAERA**

Age (months)	2018	2019	2020	2019/2020	2018/2020
0-6	158,991	158,124	167,153	+5.7%	+5.1%
6-12	157,327	150,569	158,493	+5.3%	+0.7%
12-18	230,226	217,571	217,211	-0.2%	-5.7%
18-24	121,714	120,053	114,541	-4.6%	-5.9%
24-30	125,108	129,085	117,493	-9.0%	-6.1%
30 +	312,603	295,787	292,359	-1.2%	-6.5%

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# WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

## CATTLE TRADE

### NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 04/05/20	Next Week 11/05/20
<b>Prime</b>		
U-3	316 - 320p	318 - 322p
R-3	310 - 314p	312 - 316p
O+3	304 - 308p	306 - 310p
P+3	254 - 262p	256 - 264p
	Including bonus where applicable	
<b>Cows</b>		
O+3 & better	230 - 236p	236 - 250p
Steakers	140 - 170p	140 - 170p
Blues	120 - 130p	120 - 130p

Cow quotes vary depending on weight and grade.  
Pricing policies vary from plant to plant. Producers are advised to check pricing policies before presenting cattle for slaughter.

### Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes for U-3 grade prime cattle this week held steady at 316-320p/kg with an improvement of 2p/kg to 318-322p/kg for steers and heifers expected early next week. At the start of the week quotes for good quality O+3 grade cows ranged from 230-236p/kg however with a tightening in the number of cows coming forward for processing the trade has improved to 236-250p/kg.

Throughput of prime cattle in NI plants last week totalled 5,815 head. This brings total prime cattle throughput during 2020 to 121,205 head marginally back when compared to the same period in 2019. Cow throughput in NI last week totalled 1,281 head taking throughput for the year to date to 31,806 head. This is an increase of six per cent from the corresponding period in 2019.

Imports of prime cattle from ROI for direct slaughter in NI plants last week totalled 136 head with 16 cows also imported. This brings total prime cattle imports from ROI during 2020 to date to 2,758 head, back 757 head from the same period in 2019. Meanwhile cattle exports from NI for slaughter in ROI plants consisted of 31 cows last week. This brings total cattle exports during 2020 to date to 1,056 head, back 1,013 head when compared to the same period in 2019.

Last week tighter supplies of all types of cattle contributed to an improvement in deadweight prices. The R3 steer price in NI last week was up 3.5p/kg from the previous week to 325.9p/kg. In the corresponding week last year the R3 steer price in NI was 342.6p/kg. The average steer price was up by 1.7p/kg to 316.4p/kg. The R3 heifer price in NI last week increased by 3.6p/kg to 326.6p/kg. In the corresponding week in 2019 the R3 heifer price in NI was 343.1p/kg. The average heifer price in NI last week was up by 3.2p/kg to 300.1p/kg. The young bull trade has generally strengthened in NI with an average price of 318.4p/kg last week, up just over 3p/kg from the previous week. The NI O3 cow price increased last week by 7.3p/kg to 241.3p/kg, while the average cow price was up by 6.2p/kg to 217.4p/kg when compared to the previous week.

The GB deadweight trade for prime cattle has also reported signs of improvement. The average GB steer price was up 1.6p/kg last week to 324.4p/kg with R3 steer price up by 2.4p/kg to 330.5p/kg. The R3 steer price improved in all the GB regions with the strongest increase reported in Northern England where it was up by 3.7p/kg to 337.1p/kg. The average GB heifer price last week reported an increase of a penny to 324p/kg from the previous week while the R3 heifer price was back by a penny to 328.3p/kg.

In ROI deadweight prime cattle prices reported an improving trade in euro terms however a weakening in the euro has resulted in prices generally holding steady in sterling terms. The R3 steer price was the equivalent of 300.9p/kg last week, up a penny from the previous week. This puts the ROI price 25p/kg below the NI R3 steer price. The R3 heifer price in ROI last week held steady at the equivalent of 304.5p/kg, 22.1p/kg below the equivalent price in NI.

### LAST WEEK'S DEADWEIGHT CATTLE PRICES (UK / ROI)

W/E 02/05/20	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB	
Steers	U3	324.5	308.2	339.9	334.0	331.5	326.6	333.5
	R3	325.9	300.9	341.8	337.1	326.6	322.2	330.5
	R4	324.1	300.6	344.8	345.2	325.8	320.6	338.6
	O3	313.5	287.3	330.9	310.2	301.4	300.7	306.5
	AVG	316.4	-	340.2	328.4	315.6	313.0	324.4
Heifers	U3	330.6	318.2	347.4	338.3	337.5	329.9	338.6
	R3	326.6	304.5	340.1	329.8	328.1	321.5	328.3
	R4	325.5	304.7	342.7	336.6	326.6	320.6	334.2
	O3	315.2	291.6	325.0	308.7	298.3	301.1	304.4
	AVG	319.9	-	340.4	325.1	315.3	313.2	324.0
Young Bulls	U3	318.3	296.3	333.4	327.1	325.0	323.1	329.3
	R3	312.7	287.4	325.5	323.3	318.2	316.3	321.7
	O3	293.6	268.3	295.1	294.1	284.2	274.1	290.3
	AVG	300.1	-	320.5	312.1	310.4	311.6	314.5
	Prime Cattle Price Reported	5,021	-	6,478	6,439	7,205	4,944	25,066
Cows	O3	241.3	224.5	242.3	248.5	243.0	238.8	244.0
	O4	242.0	224.8	246.2	249.0	243.4	233.7	243.4
	P2	200.5	199.4	205.7	208.2	193.3	195.3	197.0
	P3	220.7	215.5	220.8	221.0	208.6	209.7	210.9
	AVG	217.4	-	236.4	228.3	209.5	207.2	216.0

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=87.16p Stg  
(ii) Shading indicates a lower price than the previous week.  
(iii) AVG is the average of all grades in the category, not just those listed

### REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 02/05/20	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	323.2	330.3	318.1
R3	323.0	325.2	313.6
O+3	314.1	313.8	301.9

\*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

### REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 02/05/20	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	134.6	149.4	167.5	168.5
P2	155.2	178.5	197.3	217.3
P3	182.0	190.6	214.0	223.6
O3	180.0	230.0	241.7	241.7
O4	-	193.2	227.3	242.9
R3	-	-	-	261.3

### LATEST LIVELWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

W/E 02/05/20	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
	From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
<b>Finished Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Steers	200	210	205	175	199	187
Friesians	157	175	166	126	156	141
Heifers	204	214	209	175	203	189
Beef Cows	148	182	165	120	147	134
Dairy Cows	112	126	119	74	111	93
<b>Store Cattle (p/kg)</b>						
Bullocks up to 400kg				No Sale		
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg						
Bullocks over 500kg						
Heifers up to 450kg						
Heifers over 450kg						
<b>Dropped Calves (£/head)</b>						
Continental Bulls	340	470	400	250	335	290
Continental Heifers	325	400	360	200	320	260
Friesian Bulls	-	-	-	-	-	-
Holstein Bulls	-	-	-	-	-	-

# SHEEP TRADE

## NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 04/05/20	Next Week 11/05/20
Hoggets up to 22kg	440-450p	430-460p
Spring Lambs up to 21kg	470-490p	470-490p

## REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 18/04/20	W/E 25/04/20	W/E 02/05/20
NI D/W Spring Lambs	492.2	516.2	496.5
NI D/W Hoggets	464.9	481.6	462.0
GB D/W Spring Lambs	506.7	516.4	523.0
GB D/W Hoggets	457.8	463.8	473.8
ROI D/W	493.6	517.7	-

## Deadweight Sheep Trade

Quotes for spring lambs this week ranged from 470-490p/kg across the major NI plants with spring lambs accounting for 59 per cent of price reported sheep processed in NI plants last week. The number of hoggets has started to decline in line with normal seasonal trends with quotes ranging from 440-450p/kg to 22kg across the plants this week. Similar quotes are expected for spring lambs and hoggets early next week.

Hogget/lamb throughput in NI last week totalled 4,775 head this brings the year to date throughput to 107,188 head an increase of 15.6 per cent compared same period in 2019. A further 2,289 hoggets/lambs were exported to ROI for direct slaughter last week bringing the total for the year to date to 99,205 head. This is an increase of 1,800 head or two per cent from the same period in 2019.

The deadweight spring lamb price in NI last week was 496.5p/kg, back by 19.7p/kg while the NI hogget price decreased by a similar margin to 462p/kg. In the corresponding week in 2019 the average NI deadweight spring lamb and hogget price was 473.7p/kg and 448.8p/kg respectively.

Meanwhile in GB the hogget price increased by 10p/kg last week to 473.8p/kg. An increasing proportion of spring lambs were reported in GB with an average deadweight price of 523p/kg.

## Marts Update

### LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 02/05/20		Spring Lambs				Hoggets			
To: 07/05/20		No	From	To	Avg	No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Swatragh	700	385	425	-	-	-	-	-
Monday	Massereene	250	440	491	-	198	400	433	-
Tuesday	Rathfriland	250	444	490	-	80	390	443	-
Wednesday	Ballymena	404	440	541	455	255	300	380	330
	Markethill	300	470	498	-	80	350	381	-

This week the liveweight sheep trade has resumed in some of the marts with strict Covid-19 restrictions in place. In Massereene on Monday 250 spring lambs sold from 440-491p/kg, with 198 hoggets selling from 400-433p/kg. In Rathfriland on Tuesday 250 spring lambs sold from 444-490p/kg with 80 hoggets selling from 390-443p/kg. On Wednesday in Ballymena 404 spring lambs sold to an average of 455p/kg. Top reported prices for cull ewes ranged from £98-148.

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